

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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R 242054Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8053

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 3908

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PN ELAB PINT

SUBJECT: GOP GIVES FRIENDLY RESPONSE TO CTCA CONFERENCE

GUATEMALA PASS USAID AND ROCAP

SUMMARY. THE AIFLD SUPPORTED CONFERENCE OF LABOR CONFEDERATIONS OF LATIN AMERICAN AND PANAMA TOOK PLACE JULY 16-20. CONFERENCE ENJOYED SIGNIFICANT LABOR MINISTRY PARTICIPATION AND FAVORABLE PRESS COVERAGE. ON FINAL DAY REPRESENTATIVES UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED RESOLUTION EXPRESSING SOLIDARITY WITH PANAMA'S ASPIRATIONS FOR SOVEREIGNTY OVER ALL ITS TERRITORY. END SUMMARY.

1. THE SEVENTH CONFERENCE OF THE LABOR CONFEDERATIONS OF CENTRAL AMERICAN AND PANAMA AND THE SEVENTH CONGRESS OF THE CENTRAL AMERICAN LABOR CONFEDERATION (CTCA) SUPPORTED BY ITS LOCAL AFFILIATE, THE CTRP, APPARENTLY SUCCEEDED IN ALLAYING THE GOVERNMENT'S SUSPICION AND EVEN HOSTILITY, WHICH THE EMBASSY REPORTED AFTER THE LAST SUCH CONGRESS TWO YEARS AGO. THE CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS SKILLFULLY BROUGHT PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT THROUGH ITS MINISTRY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL WELFARE INTO THE CONFERENCE

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AGENDA AND GOP WAS PUBLICLY GIVEN CONSIDERABLE PRAISE FOR THE SUCCESS

OF THE CONFERENCE. THE OPENING SESSIONS ON THE EVENING OF MONDAY, JULY 16, WERE HELD IN THE AUDITORIUM OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH, AND THE KEYNOTE SPEECH OF WELCOME WAS GIVEN BY THE MINISTER OF LABOR, DR. ROLANDO MURGAS. VICEMINISTER LUIS A. SHIRLEY STAYED AT THE FESTIVITIES ON OPENING NIGHT UNTIL VERY LATE AND GAVE ONE OF THE PAPERS AT A LATER SESSION.

2. THE SMALL GROUP OF AIFLD REPRESENTATIVES FROM WASHINGTON AND GUATEMALA WERE QUITE SUCCESSFUL IN MAINTAINING A DISCREET LOW-PROFILE DURING THE MEETINGS. A PAPER GIVEN BY PETER GREGORY OF UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO WAS WELL-RECEIVED AND REPORTED ON IN PRESS. THESE WAS NO USG MISSION ATTENDANCE.

3. PRESS COVERAGE BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE CONFERENCE CONSISTED PRINCIPALLY OF BRIEF, FACTUAL STORIES GIVING PROCEDURAL DETAILS, ALTHOUGH ON SECOND DAY OF CONFERNNCE THE GOP CONTROLLED EL PANAMA AMERICAN DEVOTED AN EDITORIAL TO IT PROCLAIMING THE IMPORTANCE OF MEETING, STATING THAT PANAMA HAD BEEN SELECTED AS CONFERENCE SITE BECAUSE "OUR COUNTRY HAS SUCCEEDED IN BECOMING, AS A RESULT OF THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS..THE PLACE WHERE WIDE DEMOCRATIC TOLERANCE, LIBERTY OF MOVEMENT, THOUGHT AND ACTION...EXISTS IN THE PRESS." ONE OF THE TWO MOST RADICAL GOVERNMENT-MANAGED SHEETS, CRITICA REPORTED NOTHING WHILE MATUTINO WAITED UNTIL THE CONFERENCE ITSELF WAS OVER BEFORE GIVING, ON SATURDAY, JULY 21, THE MOST COMPLETE COVERAGE OF ANY PAPER, INCLUDING A FULL PAGE OF PICTURES AND ADDITIONAL DETAILS SUCH AS SOME OF THE MORE TECHNICAL RESOLUTIONS (TO FOLLOW UNDER SEPARATE COVER TO DEPT. OF STATE).

4. PERHAPS MATUTINO'S GENEROUS FULL PAGE TREATMENT OF THE CONFERENCE WAS ENSURED BY THE RESOLUTION ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY DURING THE FINAL EVENING OF THE CONFERENCE, JULY 20, ON THE PANAMA CANAL. RESOLUTION AS REPORTED IN PRESS WAS MODERATE, EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR PANAMANIAN PEOPLE IN ITS "JUST ASPIRATIONS FOR TERRITORIAL SOVEREIGNTY AND NATIONAL DIGNITY" AND URGING PANAMANIAN WORKERS TO CONTINUE THE FIGHT WHICH IN THE LONG RUN WOULD RESULT IN "FINAL VICTORY IN THAT STRIP OF TERRITORY (THE CANAL ZONE) WHICH IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE REPUBLIC."
SAYRE

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